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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

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Technical cooperation activities for 2018

Summary

The present document provides an overview of technical cooperation activities implemented by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) since the fourth meeting of the Executive Committee, which are funded from the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC), the United Nations Development Account and extrabudgetary sources.

The present document contains information on RPTC, through which ESCWA provides support to member States in building technical capacity and offers advisory services. The document also sets out key achievements by the secretariat in supporting the least developed countries, establishing technical cooperation frameworks at the national level, and launching activities that highlight the interlinkages between the three following functions of ESCWA: a research institution producing studies aimed at supporting policy reform, a house of expertise providing technical guidance to decision makers, and a regional forum for building consensus between member States on ways to overcome the challenges they face.

The Executive Committee is invited to take note of implemented technical cooperation activities, and make proposals on their advancement in the coming period.

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Introduction

1. The Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC) is a key tool for implementing the programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). Technical cooperation projects are designed in line with member States' requests so as to meet their needs. In addition to RPTC flexibility in meeting emerging and urgent needs in the region, it has succeeded in shifting towards strategies that focus on establishing national frameworks for coordinating cooperation to achieve the desired results. When developing those frameworks, ESCWA ensures integrated planning for technical cooperation provided to member States to improve interaction, increase impact, and enhance transparency and accountability. As part of such efforts, RPTC resources were reorganized to ensure consistency with the ESCWA strategic framework, which focused in 2018 on the following three main pillars: inclusive development, regional integration, and good governance and resilience.

2. Technical cooperation at ESCWA is part of broader international efforts aimed at achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The work of ESCWA, under its seven specialized subprogrammes that address the various dimensions of development in the Arab region, intersects with most of the 17 SDGs.

3. Technical cooperation services provided by ESCWA are divided into the following three categories: advisory services to support member States in public policy issues; capacity-building workshops, study tours and fellowships; and pilot field projects in the areas of specialization of ESCWA that will be developed into larger projects with funding from extrabudgetary sources. ESCWA aims to adopt a results-orientated multidisciplinary approach for technical cooperation activities.

4. To identify priority areas for technical cooperation in member States, ESCWA holds national multisectoral workshops with representatives of various ministries and relevant government bodies. During discussions, participants are requested to determine needs, desired outcomes and long-term visions for change emanating from proposed initiatives.

5. Technical cooperation activities are financed from RPTC, the United Nations Development Account and extrabudgetary sources. ESCWA aims to achieve integration between those three sources and its normative research work that is funded by the regular budget.

I. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2018

6. ESCWA has completed 79 advisory missions and capacity-building activities under the RPTC budget, has led 10 technical cooperation projects financed by the United Nations Development Account,[1] and has implemented 8 projects funded from extrabudgetary sources.

7. ESCWA has completed preparations for signing national technical cooperation frameworks with Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, and has continued implementing signed frameworks with Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco and the Sudan. It organized a national workshop on technical cooperation to establish cooperation frameworks with Jordan, and is preparing similar workshops for Kuwait, the State of Palestine and Yemen.

8. Under projects aimed at building the capacity of developing countries in priority areas in accordance with the United Nations development agenda, ESCWA has implemented 19 training sessions at the regional, subregional and national levels funded by the Development Account. ESCWA led 10 projects and was an implementing partner in 3; the Sudan participated in 6 of the projects, Mauritania in 4, and Yemen in 4. ESCWA also prepared 4 training manuals for policymakers, and organized 5 advisory missions and 6 expert group meetings.

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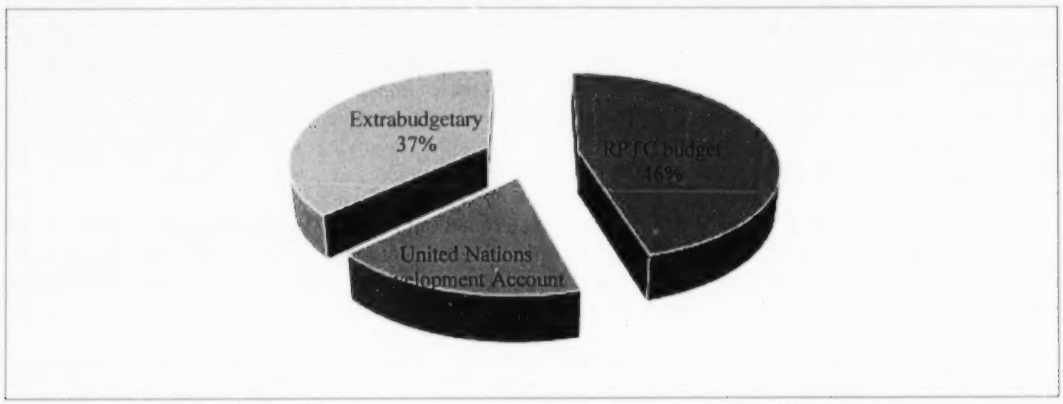
[1] The United Nations Secretariat established the Development Account in 1997 to finance projects aimed at building the capacity of developing countries in priority areas, in accordance with the United Nations development agenda.

9. Iraq, the Sudan and Tunisia benefited the most from technical cooperation activities provided by ESCWA under the RPTC budget. Figure 1 shows the distribution of technical cooperation activities implemented by ESCWA according to funding sources.

Figure 1. Technical cooperation activities by funding source, 2018



II. EXAMPLES OF INTEGRATED TECHNICAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY ESCWA TO MEMBER STATES

10. ESCWA aims to achieve coherence between its functions, especially between the studies and reports it prepares and the activities it implements. An example of this approach was work that began with a 2017 study entitled "Rethinking fiscal policy in the Arab region",[2] which highlights the challenges faced by decision makers in identifying mechanisms to link fiscal policies with the SDGs to develop a social expenditure observatory. The observatory aims to evaluate all public spending on the social sector, which is measured differently in each country. Work has begun on establishing the observatory in Jordan and Tunisia, and discussions are underway on its establishment in Kuwait. ESCWA is currently preparing a project to finance the next phases of this initiative, to guide policies based on detailed records of social expenditures towards achieving social development without undermining macroeconomic priorities.

11. In the context of regional cooperation, ESCWA has conducted several activities in collaboration with the League of Arab States, including organizing a training workshop on sand and dust storms in the Arab region (Cairo, 10-12 February 2018). Several organizations participated in the workshop, including the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Egyptian Meteorological Authority, the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites, and the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre. The workshop improved the technical capacity of workers and researchers in the meteorological field in Arab countries, especially with regard to analysis, forecasting, using ground-based measurements and satellites, storm modelling and classification, and preparing and collecting data on models. The workshop also highlighted the social and economic impact of sand and dust storms and their repercussions for ecosystems.

12. ESCWA, in collaboration with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Population Fund, organized the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration. The Conference complemented ESCWA activities under a project on national capacity-building for the development of integrated, sustainable and inclusive population policies in the Arab region. The project led to the establishment of partnerships with government institutions in five Arab countries, notably with the Higher Population Council of Jordan, the Ministry of Social Affairs of Lebanon, the Ministry of Family,

[2] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/4

Solidarity, Equality and Social Development of Morocco, the National Population Council of the Sudan, and the National Board for Family and Population of Tunisia. Over three and a half years, the project succeeded in developing policies by building national capacity, and preparing innovative studies that facilitated national dialogues on formulating evidence-based policies. In the Sudan, for example, ESCWA supported efforts by the National Population Council to prepare a draft migration strategy, and contributed to the launch of a national dialogue to build consensus on issues and priorities that should be contained in the strategy. In Lebanon, a field study on the economic and social status of older persons formed the knowledge base for a strategy on older persons by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

13. As part of ESCWA efforts to strengthen the exchange of expertise and knowledge networks between Arab countries, and in collaboration with officials at the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of Jordan, ESCWA conducted an institutional assessment of the needs of the Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs Authority of Iraq to benefit from the experience of Jordan in advancing the role of specialized institutions, formulating inclusive public policies in all fields, and enacting legislation in the light of definitions set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in line with the principle of protecting the right to legal capacity.

14. Discussions at those government meetings contributed to advancing field knowledge and ESCWA services to support public policies regarding the rights of persons with disabilities. A meeting held with the World Health Organization led to the development of approaches to define disability in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and international classifications. ESCWA provided technical support to Iraq and Libya in that regard, and collaborated with the League of Arab States in developing an Arab disability index to improve data collection in that field. ESCWA is currently preparing a development project, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization, aimed at integrating persons with disabilities in labour markets in the Arab region.

15. With regard to women's rights, ESCWA published the Status of Arab Women Report 2017 entitled "Violence against Women: What Is at Stake?". It also developed a practical model to estimate the cost of marital violence on national economies. ESCWA continued this normative work in 2018 through extrabudgetary activities that involved holding regional consultations on estimating the cost of violence against women. Following those consultations, ESCWA received many requests for technical support, in which Arab countries expressed their interest in implementing the proposed economic model. ESCWA provided support to Iraq, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia to develop and implement national operational plans specifically designed to measure the cost of violence against women. ESCWA also assisted member States in developing surveys to measure the prevalence of violence against women as an integral part of the cost estimation approach. To ensure the transfer of knowledge to all member States and guide them, ESCWA prepared a manual that explains in detail the requirements for each stage of the cost estimation process.

16. Concerning renewable energy, ESCWA contributed to the development of the Global Tracking Framework 2017 – Progress Toward Sustainable Energy, and concurrently published a study entitled "Arab Region Progress in Sustainable Energy: Global Tracking Framework Regional Report". ESCWA complemented that normative work on monitoring SDG 7 with a series of projects to increase energy efficiency in the housing and services sectors in the Arab region. It also implemented the following two projects on promoting renewable energy: promoting renewable energy investments for climate change mitigation and sustainable development; and developing the capacity of ESCWA member States to address the water and energy nexus for achieving the SDGs. Work included training tools on preparing projects and the efficient use of resources and renewable energy. ESCWA also implemented extrabudgetary projects, including preparing a regional follow-up report on SDG 7 that was drafted by ESCWA in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, and launching a project that takes gender issues into consideration, supported by the Swedish International Development Agency and entitled "Regional initiative for promoting small-scale renewable energy applications in rural areas of the Arab region". Such technical support complements the analysis provided by ESCWA in a study entitled "Evaluating Renewable Energy Manufacturing Potential in the Arab Region: Jordan, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates".

17. To support member States efforts in implementing the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA organized the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development in 2018, in collaboration with the League of Arab States. To achieve the SDGs at the national level, ESCWA adapted its support according to country needs. In this context, it translated the "Handbook for preparation of voluntary national reviews" and developed a voluntary national review road map for Oman for 2019. It also organized a regional workshop on sound institutional environments and cooperation, dialogue and partnerships to produce and use sustainable development indicators, which was attended by 52 participants: 38 representatives of 15 Arab States, such as heads of national statistical offices and decision makers, and 14 representatives of United Nations organizations and agencies and other bodies (Tunis, 6-8 February 2018). Moreover, ESCWA organized a regional workshop on measuring SDG indicators on violence against women and time-use indicators, which was attended by 15 representatives of national statistical offices and national apparatuses concerned with women's advancement in 7 Arab countries, namely Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, the State of Palestine, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates, and representatives of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund (Tangiers, Morocco, 7-9 May 2018).

18. In the context of the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region, ESCWA published a study entitled "Perspectives of Digital Economy in the Arab Region"[3] in June 2018. The study addresses the global components of digital economy, provides an assessment of digital economy in Arab countries, and presents a set of policy recommendations to enhance digital economy performance to generate more employment opportunities and drive economic growth. Based on the study's findings, ESCWA organized a series of capacity-building workshops, including on digital governance strategies in Morocco, on policies for critical infrastructure protection (cybersecurity), and on governance of science parks and technological incubators in the Sudan. ESCWA also contributed to several digital transformation strategies in Jordan, and is communicating with the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology to continue their launch.

19. Concerning efforts to advance management systems, ESCWA published a series of reports on Arab governance that tackled the restructuring and reform of key institutions in view of conflicts and political transitions in the Arab region. Based on the findings of those reports, ESCWA launched technical support initiatives that included preparing a common Arab framework for the competencies of public sector employees, in collaboration with Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine and Tunisia. The framework aims to link competencies to employment and training policies and to evaluate performance and organizational plans in public sector institutions. Moreover, ESCWA organized three workshops on mechanisms for disseminating and applying the general principles of good governance in 15 government departments in Tunisia. It also developed a practical analysis of institutional gaps in the Yemeni Government under a development project on strengthening institutional development and participation to achieve the SDGs. In that context, ESCWA held two workshops at which it presented a guide on institutional evaluation, its methodology and mechanisms. On the basis of the analysis, a practical evaluation and analysis was conducted on the capacity of Yemeni institutions to prepare operational plans and strategies, and a study was carried out on the status and management of public budgets and on coordinating work with other government bodies, international donors and relevant non-governmental bodies.

20. Concerning the multiple dimensions of governance, ESCWA implemented an extrabudgetary project on launching a community dialogue to formulate a common vision of economic and social development in Libya. In that context, ESCWA published training material on managing the community dialogue and its mechanisms. ESCWA is also preparing three studies on the current status of Libyan institutions, and held a series of expert group meetings to discuss their findings. Regarding economic governance, ESCWA, in coordination with the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation of Egypt, conducted a training of trainers on legislative reforms to attract investment. Furthermore, ESCWA organized a workshop on economic diversification and competitiveness in Bahrain, and is collaborating in that regard with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to develop options for political reform based on evidence and international standards. Concerning electronic governance, ESCWA provided technical support under a development project of the Academy of

[3] E/ESCWA/IDD/2017/2.

ICT Essentials for Government Leaders in the Arab Region, and organized capacity-building workshops in that area in Morocco and the Sudan.

III. ADVISORY SERVICES FINANCED FROM THE RPTC BUDGET

21. ESCWA provided 38 advisory services for member States, mostly under subprogrammes 3 and 5 on economic development and integration, and statistics for evidence-based policymaking (table 1).

TABLE 1. ADVISORY SERVICES TO MEMBER STATES, 2018

	Integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development	Social development	Economic development and integration	Technology for development and regional integration	Statistics for evidence-based policy development	Advancement of women	Conflict mitigation and development	Technical cooperation	Total
Egypt		1	1						2
Iraq			2			1	3		6
Jordan			2					1	3
Lebanon			2						2
Mauritania			1						1
Morocco					2				2
Oman			1						1
State of Palestine					3				3
Qatar						1			1
Saudi Arabia					1	4			5
Sudan					1				1
Syrian Arab Republic	1				1			1	3
Tunisia			1			1	1		3
United Arab Emirates					1				1
Yemen					1	0			1
Total	1	1	10	0	10	7	4	2	35

Figure 2. Advisory services financed from the RPTC budget by subprogramme, 2018

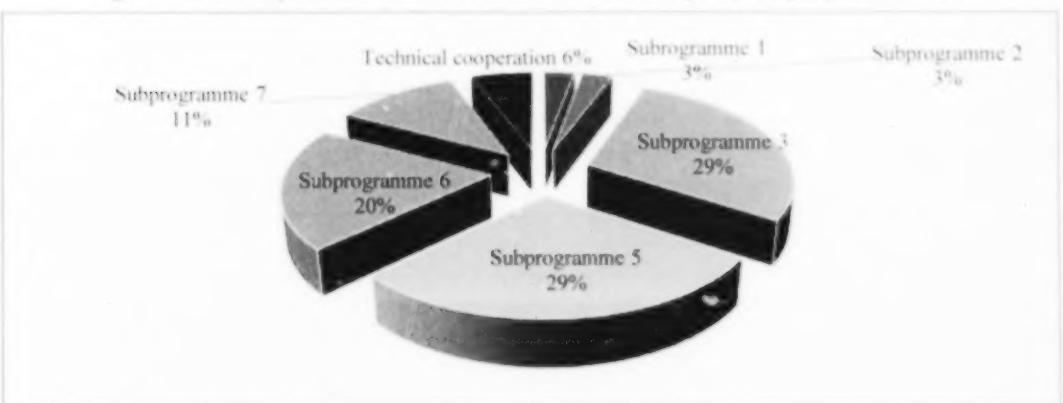
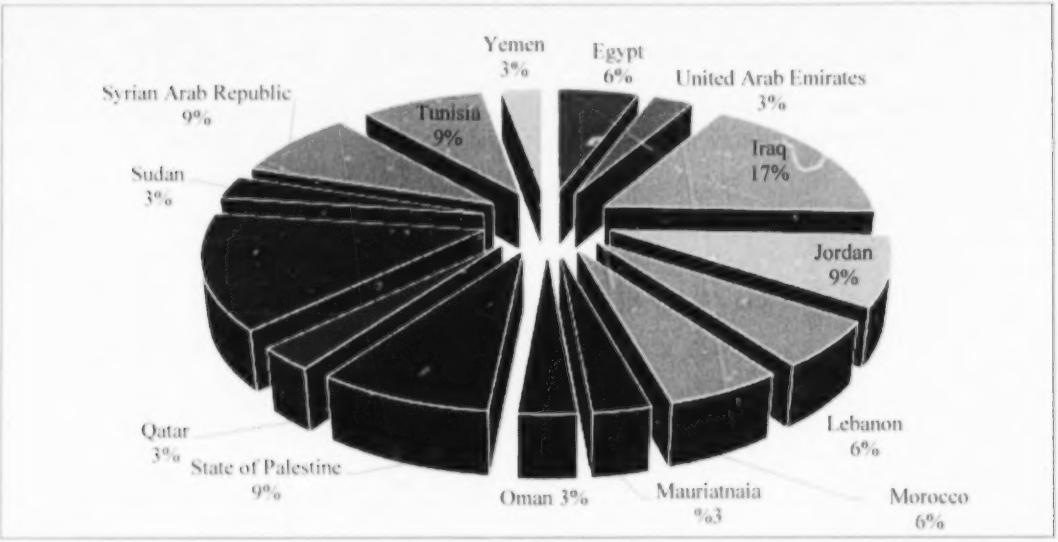


Figure 3. Advisory services financed from the RPTC budget by recipient country, 2018



IV. CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES FINANCED FROM THE RPTC BUDGET

22. ESCWA organized several capacity-building activities financed from the RPTC budget (table 2).

TABLE 2. CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES PROVIDED TO MEMBER STATES, 2018

	Integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development	Social development	Economic development and integration	Technology for development and regional integration	Statistics for evidence-based policymaking	Advancement of women	Conflict mitigation and development	Total
Bahrain			1	1				2
Egypt			2					2
Iraq		1	1					2
Libya					1			1
Mauritania				1				1
Morocco				2				2
Oman						1		1
State of Palestine	1							1
Sudan				5				5
Tunisia							3	3
United Arab Emirates					1			1
Yemen						1		1
Total	1	1	4	9	2	2	3	22

Figure 4. Distribution of capacity-building activities financed from the RPTC budget, 2018

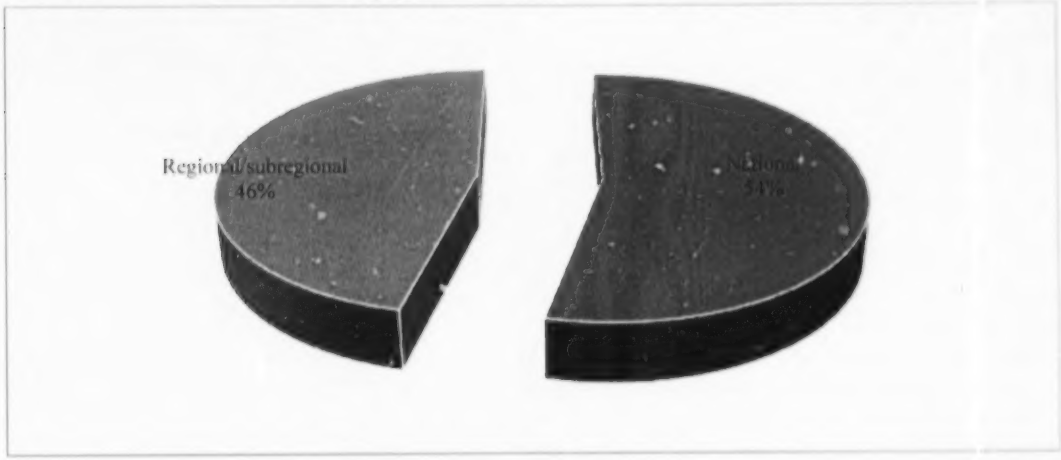
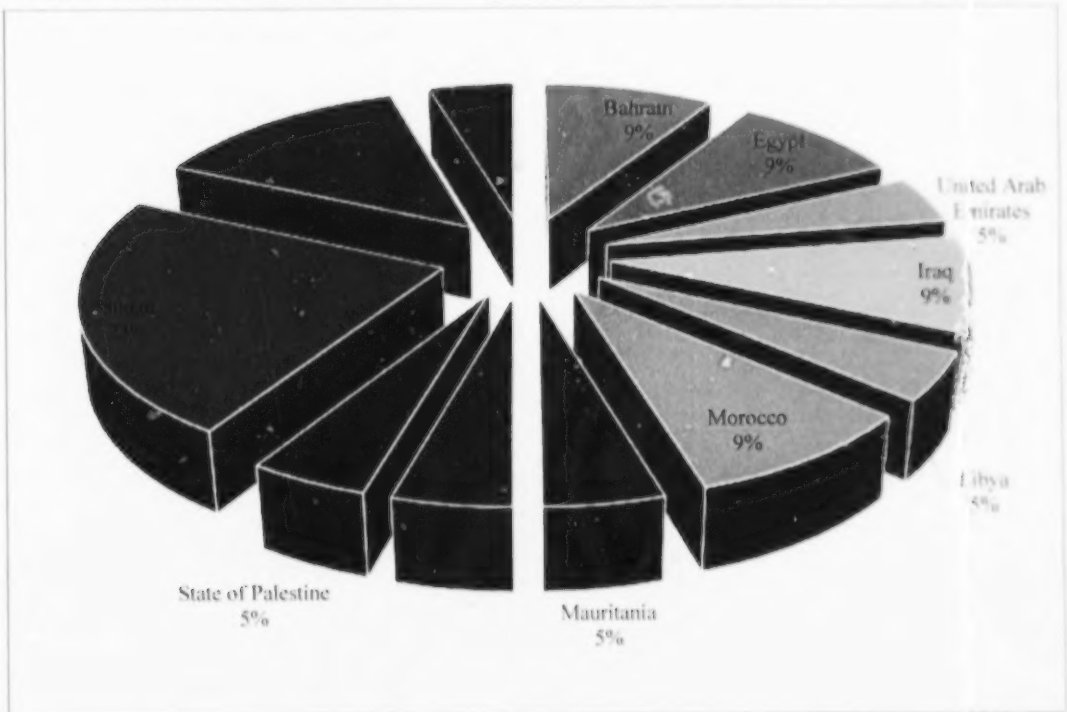


Figure 5. Capacity-building activities financed from the RPTC budget by recipient country, 2018



V. STUDY TOURS FINANCED FROM THE RPTC BUDGET

23. ESCWA organized three study tours for government officials, which complement ESCWA commitments and work on strengthening South-South cooperation and facilitating the transfer of good practices (table 3).

TABLE 3. STUDY TOURS FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, 2018

Activity	Country	Number of participants
Training on energy statistics and budgets, organized by the International Energy Agency (Paris, 19-23 March 2018)	Mauritania	1
Eleventh meeting of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (Rabat, 9-10 May 2018) Side events on mechanisms for funding statistics (Rabat, 8 May 2018)	Iraq	1
Meetings of technical subcommittees on national accounts and economic statistics, organized by the League of Arab States Statistics and information systems: - Twelfth meeting of the subcommittee on national accounts - Fifteenth meeting of the subcommittee on economic statistics (Headquarters of the League of Arab States, 16-18 July 2018)	Mauritania	1
	Iraq	1
	Sudan	1
	State of Palestine	1
	Total	6

VI. ACTIVITIES FUNDER FROM THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

24. ESCWA completed 30 activities under the United Nations Development Account, including advisory missions, capacity-building workshops, expert group meetings and four training manuals (table 4).

TABLE 4. ESCWA ACTIVITIES FUNDED FROM THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT, 2018

	Number
Advisory missions	5
Training workshops	19
Expert group meetings	6
Training manuals	4
Total	34

VII. EXTRABUDGETARY ACTIVITIES

25. Under the eight technical cooperation projects funded from extrabudgetary sources, ESCWA held capacity-building workshops and expert group meetings and prepared three training manuals and 57 publications (table 5).

TABLE 5. ESCWA EXTRABUDGETARY ACTIVITIES, 2018

	Number
Training workshops	17
Expert group meetings	47
Training manuals	3
Publications	57
Total	124

VIII. CONCLUSION

26. ESCWA has linked its work on technical cooperation activities with its key functions in research, analysis and consensus-building to support policymaking. Under RPTC, it has striven to intensify efforts related to organizing workshops aimed at developing national technical cooperation plans that focus on identifying country needs. It has also organized multidisciplinary missions to provide integrated support to member States in tackling complex and multidimensional challenges.

27. ESCWA has continued its efforts to build strategic alliances with regional training institutions, think tanks and academic institutions to develop effective mechanisms for honing skills. Such alliances enable ESCWA to benefit from available expertise to rapidly respond to country requests for technical cooperation.

28. ESCWA is also working on forging partnerships with other United Nations organizations and stakeholders. In the coming period, it will develop plans in coordination with United Nations country teams, national focal points and ministries. This approach will allow ESCWA to respond to country requests more efficiently and effectively.